



Anti-Bullying Module

**Reading Public Schools
August 2018**

Priority Statements

1. Reading Public Schools expects that **all members** of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect and appreciation for differences. ***Our district goal of addressing the social-emotional and behavioral health needs of our students will frame all efforts of this plan.***
2. Reading Public Schools is committed to **providing all students with a safe learning environment** that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.
3. Reading Public Schools understands and recognizes that **members of certain student groups may be more vulnerable** to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, English Language Learners, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics. In addition, we are seeing an increase in the number of hate related activities that focus on religion, gender identity, or race. The schools and district will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and **provide all students and staff with the skills, knowledge, and strategies** to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Priority Statements (cont.)

4. Reading Public Schools **will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation**, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will **investigate promptly** all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore a sense of safety for all involved. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement.

5. The Reading Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“Plan”) is a **comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying**. Each school and the district are committed to working with students, staff, families, the Reading Police Department, agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. ***The principal will be responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan at the school level with the Assistant Superintendent providing oversight at the district level.***



Bullying Prevention and Intervention

M.G.L. c.71, § 37O and the District's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) prohibit bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation:

- on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a school district or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by a school district or school; and/or
- at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school district or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Definitions

Bullying:

- the **repeated** use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that:
 - causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; or
 - places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; or
 - creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; or
 - infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or
 - materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.



Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Definitions, cntd.

- Cyberbullying
 - Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication
 - Also includes:
 - The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; or
 - The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying; or
 - The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.



The Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Act: Definitions

Perpetrator/Aggressor:

A student or member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

Victim/Target:

A student victim of bullying or retaliation.

Hostile Environment:

Where bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive as to alter the conditions of the student's education.

Retaliation:

Reprisal or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses; has reliable information about bullying.



Bullying – Vulnerable Populations

Certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Ancestry
- National origin
- Sex
- Socioeconomic status
- Homelessness
- Academic status
- Gender identity or expression
- Physical appearance
- Pregnant or parenting status
- Sexual orientation
- Disability or
- Or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.



The Reading Public Schools recognizes and supports this vulnerable population of students in avoiding bullying, harassment and teasing.

District-Wide Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

- **Responsibilities of School Staff**

- **Any staff member who witnesses or becomes aware of bullying or retaliation must immediately report it to the Principal or to the school official identified in the BPIP as responsible for receiving such reports or both.**

- **Complaints/Reports**

- May be oral or in writing
- May be made anonymously although no discipline can be imposed based solely on an anonymous complaint.

- **Principal's Responsibility**

- The Principal or a designee will promptly commence an investigation.
 - Principal makes preliminary determination regarding the need for referral to law enforcement and need for immediate intervention to protect the victim's safety.
 - Principal or designee conducts investigation.
 - May provide notice of ongoing investigation
 - If the Principal determines, following investigation, that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal shall:
 - notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal believes that criminal charges may be pursued against a perpetrator of bullying.
 - take appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective action;
 - notify the parents or guardians of the victim and aggressor



Reporting of Bullying or Harassment

- If you:
 - Receive a complaint or report of bullying or harassment;
 - Observe bullying or harassment; or
 - Become aware of bullying or harassment;

Report it to your Principal!



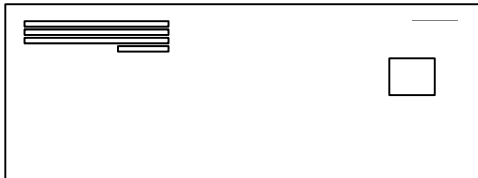
Bullying Intervention/Corrective Action

- Provide support services to the target, aggressor, and/or witnesses:
 - Restore a sense of safety for the target and assess the victim's need for protection;
 - Protection of any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of bullying from bullying or retaliation;
 - Counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and targets and for appropriate family members of said students.



Bullying Investigations: Notice of Findings

- Upon completion of the investigation, Principal/designee will:
 - Send separate written notices of the Principal's finding to the target and perpetrator
 - May not divulge student record information pertaining to student who is not the child of the parent(s) being notified
 - Must develop individualized plan by which to notify the parents of students bullied on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity
 - Notify target of the services and interventions to be provided to restore a non-hostile environment for the victim
 - Conduct parent conferences with parents of victim and parents of perpetrator if appropriate or requested
 - Conduct follow up interview with victim to monitor effectiveness of interventions and retaliatory treatment of victim or witnesses.



Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Law

- Children with Disabilities
 - M.G.L. c.71B, § 3
 - Whenever the evaluation of the IEP team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or that the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the child's disability, the IEP shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.



» Applies equally to students who are perpetrators of bullying

On-going professional development

- Developmentally, age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying
- Developmentally, age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents
- Internet safety
- Core Values
- And other SEL training topics



**Thank you for participating in our
Anti-Bullying module**

District Policy:

<https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/test/key-school-committee-policies/>